

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A paper feed apparatus for use with a paper storage capable of storing a plurality of sheets of paper, a paper feed mechanism having a paper feed roller for separating the paper stored in the paper storage sheet by sheet and capable of feeding the separated paper to a given convey path, and an inclined surface provided in the given convey path such that the inclined surface makes an obtuse angle relative to the paper stored in the paper storage, the paper feed apparatus comprising:

a plurality of projections capable of engaging with ends of the plurality of sheets of paper and of projecting from the inclined surface; and

a plurality of resilient arm portions that hold the respective projections at respective positions so as to project from a surface of the inclined surface, wherein the arm portions are aligned in at least one row along a conveying direction of the paper,

wherein the inclined surface is provided with an elongated hole formed along the conveying direction of the paper,

wherein the plurality of projections project from the inclined surface through the elongated hole.

2. (Original) The paper feed apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the arm portions are formed of metal.

3. (Original) The paper feed apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the projections are formed of a material having a high abrasion resistance.

4. (Original) The paper feed apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the plurality of projections are arranged along the conveying direction of the paper.

5. (Original) The paper feed apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the projections are formed integrally with the arm portions.

6. (Previously Presented) The paper feed apparatus according to claim 1, wherein each of the arm portions has a bent configuration.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) The paper feed apparatus according to claim 1, wherein each of the arm portions is held in a cantilever manner.

9. (Previously Presented) The paper feed apparatus according to claim 1, wherein each of the arm portions is held at the both ends thereof.

10. (Previously Presented) The paper feed apparatus according to claim 1, wherein each of the arm portions holds at least two of the projections.

11. (Previously Presented) The paper feed apparatus according to claim 1, wherein each of the arm portions holds each of the projections independently.

12. (Previously Presented) The paper feed apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the paper storage is capable of holding the plurality of sheets of paper in an inclined state relative to a horizontal plane.

13. (Currently Amended) A paper separation mechanism for use in a paper feed apparatus provided with a paper feed roller for separating a plurality of stacked sheets of paper and feeding the paper sheet by sheet, the paper separation mechanism comprising:

a paper separation unit including:

\_\_\_\_\_ a plurality of projections capable of engaging with ends of a plurality of stacked sheets of paper in the paper feed direction;

\_\_\_\_\_ a plurality of resilient arm portions that hold the respective projections at respective positions so as to engage with the ends of the paper; and

\_\_\_\_\_ a base portion that holds the resilient arm portions, wherein the arm portions are aligned in at least one row along a conveying direction of the paper; and  
\_\_\_\_\_ a holder unit having an elongated hole formed along the paper feed direction of the paper, wherein the projections of the paper separation unit project upward at a predetermined length through the elongated hole of the holder unit.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) The paper separation mechanism according to ~~claim 14~~, wherein claim 13, wherein at least the surface of the holder unit, which abuts the ends of the sheets of paper, is made of a material having a friction coefficient with the paper lower than a friction coefficient between the sheets of paper.

16. (Currently Amended) The paper separation mechanism according to ~~claim 14~~, claim 13, further comprising a separation unit retainer for retaining the base portion from thereunder and sandwiching the base portion between the separation unit retainer and the holder unit.

17. (Previously Presented) The paper separation mechanism according to claim 13, wherein each of the projections is held at the center of the arm portion, and wherein the arm portion is held at the both ends thereof by the base portion.

18. (Previously Presented) The paper separation mechanism according to claim 13, wherein each of the arm portions is held in a cantilever manner by the base portion.

19. (Previously Presented) The paper separation mechanism according to claim 13, wherein the paper separation unit comprises a plurality of paper separation plates, each of the paper separation plates including the base portion that hold the arm portions, and the paper separation plates being stacked such that the arm portions and the projections alternate with each other, respectively.

20. (Previously Presented) The paper separation mechanism according to claim 13, wherein a single one of the arm portions holds at least two of the projections.

21. (Previously Presented) The paper separation mechanism according to claim 13, wherein each of the arm portions independently holds the each projection.

22. (Original) The paper separation mechanism according to claim 13, wherein the paper separation unit is made of metal.

23. (Original) A paper feed apparatus comprising:  
a paper storage capable of storing a plurality of sheets of paper;  
a paper feed mechanism having a paper feed roller for separating the paper stored in the paper storage sheet by sheet and capable of feeding the separated paper to a given convey path; and  
an inclined surface provided in the given convey path such that the inclined surface makes an obtuse angle relative to the paper stored in the paper storage,  
wherein the paper separation mechanism according to claim 13 is provided on the inclined surface.

24. (Previously Presented) The paper feed apparatus according to claim 23, wherein the paper storage holds the plurality of sheets of paper in an inclined state relative to a horizontal plane.

25. (Currently Amended) The paper feed apparatus according to claim 23, wherein two or more of the paper separation mechanisms are provided on the inclined surface.

26. (Previously Presented) The paper feed apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the projections make a 80-95 degree angle with respect to the paper.

27. (Previously Presented) The paper feed apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the projections are designed to bend from the respective arm portions.

28. (Previously Presented) The paper separation mechanism according to claim 13, wherein the projections make a 80-95 degree angle with respect to the paper.

29. (Previously Presented) The paper separation mechanism according to claim 13, wherein the projections are designed to bend from the respective arm portions.